

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 07240

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EWWT, US, SP
SUBJECT: OMEGA INSTALLATION IN CANARY ISLANDS

REF: STATE 146611 (DTG 091503Z JUN 78)

1. EMBASSY OFFICERS CALLED ON MARIANO BERDEJO, MFA
SUB-DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR NORTH AMERICAN AND PACIFIC
AFFAIRS, ON JUNE 26 TO ENCOURAGE SPANISH SIGNATURE OF
THE OMEGA AGREEMENT. THE ENSUING DISCUSSION SHOWED THAT
THE MFA'S RESERVATIONS ARE DEEPER THAN THE LANGUAGE
PROBLEM WHICH LED TO REMOVAL FROM THE DRAFT OF ALL
REFERENCES TO THE COAST GUARD (REFTEL).

2. THESE PROBLEMS FALL INTO TWO CATEGORIES:

A. THOSE WHICH ARISE FROM THE LOCATION OF THE EQUIPMENT
IN THE CANARY ISLANDS AND EVEN INDIRECT PARTICIPATION
BY THE U.S. COAST GUARD IN THE PROJECT. BERDEJO MADE
CLEAR THAT HE AND OTHERS IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS (HE INCLUDED THE UNDER SECRETARY) QUESTION
WHETHER THE PROJECT IS WORTH THE POTENTIAL POLITICAL
RISK INVOLVED; REALITY OF THE ARRANGEMENT ASIDE, THE GOS
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WOULD REMAIN VULNERABLE TO CHARGES THAT IT IS PERMITTING
FOREIGN MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE CANARIES. HE ASKED
WHETHER ANOTHER SITE, IN SPAIN OR ELSEWHERE, COULD BE
FOUND.

B. INTERNAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT ARIS-
ING FROM THE WAY THE PROJECT WAS HANDLED BY THE FORMER

SUB-SECRETARY FOR MERCHANT MARINE (BARREDA) IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS. ACCORDING TO BERDEJO, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WHEN IT WAS INFORMED OF THE PROJECT AFTER BARREDA'S REPLACEMENT, WAS TAKEN ABACK BY THE FACT THAT THE SYSTEM BECAME OPERATIONAL BEFORE ANY AGREEMENT HAD BEEN SIGNED. (APPARENTLY BARREDA DID NOT BOTHER TO CONSULT WITH OTHER GOS AGENCIES, WHILE HIS SUCCESSOR, MORE CAUTIOUS, HURRIED TO DO JUST THAT.)

3. EMBASSY OFFICERS ASSURED BERDEJO THAT WE HAD PROCEEDED WITH THE PROJECT AFTER INITIAL CONSULTATIONS WITH FIRST VICE PRESIDENT AND DEFENSE MINISTER GUTIERREZ MELLADO AND PRECISELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH BARREDA'S WISHES. THEY UNDERLINED THE PROJECT'S IMPORTANCE, ITS UNCLASSIFIED CIVILIAN NATURE, AND ITS COMPLETE OPERATION IN SPAIN BY SPANISH TECHNICIANS. IT WAS THE EMBASSY'S UNDERSTANDING THAT THE CANARIES WERE A UNIQUELY PREFERABLE SITE.

4. BERDEJO FORECAST THAT THE MFA WILL ASK FURTHER CHANGES IN THE TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT TO GIVE THE ENTIRE PROJECT A MORE SPANISH FLAVOR. HE ALSO FLOATED INFORMALLY THE IDEA OF PASSING OWNERSHIP OF THE EQUIPMENT TO THE GOS, ARGUING THAT, IF THE SPANISH HELD TITLE TO THE EQUIPMENT, THE PROJECT COULD BE CHARACTERIZED AS BEING ENTIRELY UNDER THEIR CONTROL WHEN IT INEVITABLY BECAME PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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KNOWLEDGE.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE DOT'S REACTION TO THIS LAST-MENTIONED POSSIBILITY. WE ARE NOT CERTAIN THAT TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF THE EQUIPMENT TO THE GOS IS CRITICAL SINCE IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS THE GOS MAY PROVE RELUCTANT TO DRAW BACK FROM WHAT IS, AFTER ALL, A SUCCESSFULLY OPERATING PROJECT. NONETHELESS, WE WISH TO BE AS WELL ARMED AS POSSIBLE FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS HERE. IN THIS SAME VEIN, WE WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE RECEIVING FURTHER ARGUMENTS WITH RESPECT TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CANARIES SITE. EATON

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